MN 59 — Bahuvedaniya Sutta: Many Things to be Experienced

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Savatthi in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery.

Then Pañcakanga the carpenter went to Ven. Udayin and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he said to Ven. Udayin, "Venerable sir, how many feelings has the Blessed One spoken of?"

"Householder, the Blessed One has spoken of three feelings: a feeling of pleasure, a feeling of pain, a feeling of neither pleasure nor pain. These are the three feelings the Blessed One has spoken of."

When this was said, Pañcakanga the carpenter said to Ven. Udayin, "The Blessed One has not spoken of three feelings. He has spoken of two feelings: a feeling of pleasure and a feeling of pain. As for the feeling of neither pleasure nor pain, the Blessed One has spoken of it as a refined pleasure."

A second time, Ven. Udayin said to Pañcakanga the carpenter, "Householder, the Blessed One has not spoken of two feelings. He has spoken of three feelings...

A second time, Pañcakanga the carpenter said to Ven. Udayin, "The Blessed One has not spoken of three feelings. He has spoken of two feelings...

A third time, Ven. Udayin said to Pañcakanga the carpenter, "Householder, the Blessed One has not spoken of two feelings. He has spoken of three feelings...

A third time, Pañcakanga the carpenter said to Ven. Udayin, "The Blessed One has not spoken of three feelings. He has spoken of two feelings...

Neither was Ven. Udayin able to convince Pañcakanga the carpenter, nor was Pañcakanga the carpenter able to convince Ven. Udayin.

Now, Ven. Ananda overheard this discussion between Ven. Udayin and Pañcakanga. So he went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there he told the Blessed One of the entire discussion between Ven. Udayin and Pañcakanga.

[The Blessed One said:] "Ananda, true was the exposition that Pañcakanga the carpenter would not accept from Ven. Udayin. And true was the exposition that Ven. Udayin would not accept from Pañcakanga the carpenter. There is the exposition by which I have spoken of two feelings, the exposition by which I have spoken of three feelings ... five feelings ... six feelings ... eighteen feelings ... 36 feelings ... 108 feelings.[1] Thus I have taught the Dhamma by means of exposition. When I have taught the Dhamma by means of exposition, it can be expected that when there are those who do not consent to, assent to, or accept what is well-said and well-stated by one another, there will be arguing, quarreling, & disputing, and they will dwell wounding one another with the sword of the tongue. Thus I have taught the Dhamma by means of exposition. When I have taught the Dhamma by means of exposition, it can be expected that when there are those who do consent to, assent to, & accept what is well-said and well-stated by one another, they will live in harmony, with courtesy, without quarreling, like milk mixed with water, regarding one another with friendly eyes.

"Ananda, there are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye — agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. Sounds cognizable via the ear... Aromas cognizable via the nose... Flavors cognizable via the tongue... Tactile sensations cognizable via the body — agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. Now whatever pleasure or happiness arises in dependence on these five strands of sensuality, that is called sensual pleasure. Though some might say, 'That is the highest pleasure that beings experience,' I would not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure, more extreme & refined than that.

"And what, Ananda, is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that? There is the case where a monk — quite withdrawn from sensual pleasures, withdrawn from unskillful qualities — enters & remains in the first jhana: rapture & pleasure born from withdrawal, accompanied by directed thought & evaluation. This is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that. Though some might say, 'That is the highest pleasure that beings experience,' I would not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure, more extreme & refined than that.

"And what, Ananda, is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that? There is the case where a monk, with the stilling of directed thoughts & evaluations, enters & remains in the second jhana: rapture & pleasure born of composure, unification of awareness free from directed thought & evaluation — internal assurance. This is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that. Though some might say, 'That is the highest pleasure that beings experience,' I would not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure, more extreme & refined than that.

"And what, Ananda, is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that? There is the case where a monk, with the fading of rapture, he remains equanimous, mindful, & alert, and senses pleasure with the body. He enters & remains in the third jhana, of which the Noble Ones declare, 'Equanimous & mindful, he has a pleasant abiding.' This is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that. Though some might say, 'That is the highest pleasure that beings experience,' I would not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure, more extreme & refined than that.

"And what, Ananda, is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that? There is the case where a monk, with the abandoning of pleasure & stress — as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress — enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither-pleasure-nor-pain. This is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that. Though some might say, 'That is the highest pleasure that beings experience,' I would not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure, more extreme & refined than that.

"And what, Ananda, is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of perceptions of [physical] form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of diversity, [perceiving,] 'Infinite space,' enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. This is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that. Though some might say, 'That is the highest pleasure that beings experience,' I would not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure, more extreme & refined than that.

"And what, Ananda, is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, [perceiving,] 'Infinite consciousness,' enters & remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. This is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that. Though some might say, 'That is the highest pleasure that beings experience,' I would not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure, more extreme & refined

than that.

"And what, Ananda, is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, [perceiving,] 'There is nothing,' enters & remains in the dimension of nothingness. This is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that. Though some might say, 'That is the highest pleasure that beings experience,' I would not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure, more extreme & refined than that.

"And what, Ananda, is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, enters & remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that. Though some might say, 'That is the highest pleasure that beings experience,' I would not grant them that. Why is that? Because there is another pleasure, more extreme & refined than that.

"And what, Ananda, is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that? There is the case where a monk, with the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, enters & remains in the cessation of perception & feeling. This is another pleasure more extreme & refined than that. Now it's possible, Ananda, that some wanderers of other persuasions might say, 'Gotama the contemplative speaks of the cessation of perception & feeling and yet describes it as pleasure. What is this? How can this be?' When they say that, they are to be told, 'It's not the case, friends, that the Blessed One describes only pleasant feeling as included under pleasure. Wherever pleasure is found, in whatever terms, the Blessed One describes it as pleasure.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. Gratified, Ven. Ananda delighted in the Blessed One's words.

Notes

1.

See SN 36.22.

See also: MN 137; AN 9.34.